

Forgotten

by Biocide

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Summary: After escaping from a research facility, she cannot tell which are truth or lies. The answer comes in the form of a familiar green armored Spartan, whom she will have to learn to get along with or fall into the abyss of her growing insanity.

1. Chapter 1

****A/N:** Hello everyone! I am so terribly sorry it has taken me this long to post this rewrite. Long story short, school has taken up much of my time, as well as my new obsessions on Alice in Wonderland and Transformers, and, of course, a long dose of writer's block. MLIA speaks for itself. Anyhow, though I am very sorry that it took this long to be written, hopefully you'll be glad to know that I have about 20k more written out. Just continue what you're doing best and be patient, as finding time to write, edit, and have Credete edit is challenging to find. To try and avoid writer's block I've been daydreaming and conjuring up new ideas for stories I am both working on, and those which will probably never be written. Unnecessary tidbit of information, Bio, good going. No one cares about what you're doing, just write dang it. Well, anywho, please enjoy and tell me if there's any improvement! I am going completely off-track from my original ideas.**

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I tried and tried again. Nothing, static was the only reply.

Choking back a scream, the armored figure doubled over, fists slamming into the solid ground. Puffs of dust drifted up, spiraling upward while mixing with the deadly gases of the decaying world. The planet had recently been glassed, no more than a few years ago. The poisonous air whirled around the woman's helmet, gently probing the metal for a way in, promising a painful death if exposed.

There had to be a jammer, they had to have a jammer at that damned place! Why didn't she- A pang in the soldier's chest made her cringe,

almost making her doubt the attempts at trying to reach humanity. She had been betrayed by her people, the ones she had been trained to protect all along.

She hadâ€¦ she had woken up from cryo. Scientists all around, each either holding clipboards or punching in codes for the command module, staring at her as her vision came into focus. The blurred vision, a side effect from the long sleep, faded, and she was met with apathetic stares. One certain man, slicked back hair with the scientific disk on his head and glasses that made his eyes huge and had ears too small for his face, had been in front of her. She had soon realized that he was her torturer.

First he had started getting her moving again once the freezer burn had melted, and then he started teaching the woman of 41 things she never knew. The truth behind ONI, the truth behind the ORION Project; she had thought that her parents had died, when in reality either they agreed to it or were kidnapped. She escaped when she learned that they were all true, but the facility was a lie.

She could remember back to after the augmentation-

Digging a knee into the dirt, she lifted herself up off of the ground with a grim face behind the golden shield. It wasn't time to reminisce on the negative, because no time could be wasted with petty thoughts. But the past pushed at her mind, silent voices speaking loudly in her ears.

The silhouette of the Spartan-II stood, the dark midday gleam of the sun outlining the dull green MJOLNIR armor, the golden HUD staring out at the deserted city on the horizon.

"_What do you think is out there?" Bright gray eyes looked up at the branch above her, staring at the leg hanging a half meter from her head. The white sneaker was part of their 'civilian' uniform, but the bit of food leftover on it made her eye the shoe, but she refused to leave the comfortable spot to avoid the possible landing zone. It looked like it could either be mashed potatoes or the fake chicken they made. It was probably lemur. The thought made her miss the question, her mind focused on his shoe._

"_Yeah?" She gave the food spot one last scrutinizing glance before looking at the bit of elbow that stood out from the bark. The day was a surprisingly warm one. It was early spring, the grass had just turned green but the chilled breeze of winter lingered on; the perfect day, for the worst night. The grass pushed up against her legs, brushing the undersides of her knees. Her little legs squirmed, ticklish._

"_Ever wonder what it's like out there?" Her friend repeated the question, speaking more softly, making her listen. The serious undertone made her focus on her friend again, confusion pricking at her young mind. She looked out, and found her eyes landing on the high fence of the facility. That was why they had picked this particular tree of the forest training area, because it gave them the slightest glimpse of the life outside the walls. It was twenty feet high, and six feet thick the other kids would say, but from this spot on the hill it allowed them a small glimpse of the city a few hundred meters away from the secret facility._

"_Civilian life?" She wrinkled her nose, finding the words falling from her tongue weirdly. Life outside their own little world wasn't spoken of quite often, but not a day went by where a passive thought didn't enter their ever-growing minds. "I don't know, never really thought about it that much." The instructors frowned upon questions of the outside life, and if they talked about it amongst each other, they were punished. They were always listening, always looking for some way to wipe away their childish thoughts to replace it with the soldiers they were to become._

"_Yeah, bet it's pretty boring." He sighed, lying along the branch with his hands behind his head. "No guns, no training, must be hard being a civilian. I mean, what would you do? Laze around all day? Hang out with friends?" She thought he was going to say something else, but the message was clear. Again she was amazed with her friend. His tone held exhaustion, but the understanding was always something she looked up to. He always seemed so much older than she, so much wiser than her; so beyond his years._

"_Then why were you asking?" They can't escape, not like Ralph-303, Daisy-023, Joseph-122 would in two months. Yearning settled in the pit of her stomach, making her itch to run to the cemented and heavily guarded fence and somehow get over it with her friend, escape and live a normal life, whatever a normal life included. She looked up at the tree leaves when he didn't reply. Closing her eyes, she accepted his silence as the loudest answer she had ever been given. The answer held so much weight to it, so much need and want, but knew that it was impossible to reach._

So she sat with Mannie, and enjoyed the time they had together while they could.

Gray eyes misted, feeling frustrated when she couldn't wipe them away. She licked her chapped lips, her boots treading in the dirt. Ash was kicked up; reminding her of the videos DÃ©jÃ had shown them from the active volcanoes on Earth. They learned of Mt. Rainie, before learning of the infamous Pompey crisis. Now she believed that the 'dumb' AI was worried about their psychological states of mind and had tried leading it up to the tragedy. Bitterly, she wondered what happened to their digital teacher. If she had gone offline or if she had been deleted yet; either way she wouldn't put it past them to treat their teacher like a piece of machinery. To her creators she was just that, to the kids she was so much more.

The things she was taught at the facilities, both that she grew up in and the one she escaped, mixed and contradicted each other. Weren't they orphans? No, they had been kidnapped. Had their parents not have known that they had been kidnapped? No they had died, Dr. Halsey and Mendez saved us, brought us together as a family.

It was all lies, it was all the truth.

The Spartan shook her head, tired eyes staring on behind the golden HUD of her reflective helmet. She wasn't trained to doubt her superiors, but even betrayal crossed out that rule.

Walking along the destroyed highway, climbing over rubble from collapsed bridges, and dragging herself past the long since dead bodies, she could do nothing but simmer in her rage, and when she got tired of that, lose herself in her memories.

Over two months ago she had escaped from the research facility, ran away from the man with the too-big eyes and the too-little ears. Oh no, Spartans do not run away, but merely strategically retreat before making a counterattack. It's just taking her a while to come up with said countermeasures. She had never been good at counterattacks; her friend was the thinker of the pair.

Looking down at the ground, she absentmindedly kicked up dust with her steps. Kill them with fire? Tempting, but with the chemicals in the air it'd probably backfire. Cross off explosives.

She thought back to the research facility and the odd bug-eyed man. In her head she turned and looked at the files he held, back to her. It was about her, her history, and her genetics. But she ignored all of that this time. Instead, she had looked at the date of the file, and found that it had been an old one, back when she had been paralyzed. She didn't get to see all of it, but the word 'retrieved' had unsettled her. Had she caught some form of disease? The augmentation, among strengthening the body, was also supposed to strengthen the immune system for the worst illnesses. But because she had seen this file many times in her head, the unease had lessened. Besides, she was away from the facility. Even so, the 'out of sight, out of mind' theory did not work here.

Surviving the past few months had been rough, but that was what their training was about. In the back of her mind, a part of her hoped that this is just a very long training mission, and someone would pop out and say 'you fail!' and she has to start all over again after going through a training course a few hundred times. That hope was virtually crushed when no one had popped out of nowhere, the static had not become clear, and the jerky-looking bodies that had managed to be preserved from whatever warfare had happened here made her mood sour.

She had survived by scavenging, as much to her disdain. Searching both destroyed and mysteriously still standing houses, she managed to find the little things: medical supplies, water, and cans of food, for a start. Of course she saw no need for any medical supplies now, as she hasn't seen another soul for one and a half months, and any open water she had found was contaminated. Raiding grocery stores proved fruitful, as any surviving water bottles had found her grateful. Preserved food didn't have much flavor, but it's all she has.

The tricky part is being able to eat in an uncontaminated place, and since yesterday morning it seemed that all her vents were filtering was poisonous gas. Her stomach twisted as her tongue, dry and thick, tried wetting her lips. The muscle felt tingly and scarred, and her stomach was trying to eat itself. It left a bad taste on her lips and in her mouth, making her grimace.

She sighed, rubbing her fingertips together subconsciously, unable to feel the simple motion.

She doesn't remember when she was fitted with the MJOLNIR armor, just that the scientists at the research facility hadn't known how to operate it. She was informed that some had tried and broke their bones. She sprained three ribs just trying to breathe in it. It took a lot of concentration, and after breaking her hand and a couple

bones in a leg, she figured out that she has to will herself to move and the suit will follow. Of course escaping with the newly acquired armor had proven difficult, the experience was a benefit.

Now, like her brothers, it now feels like a second skin. Whenever she eats she feels uncomfortable having to take off the helmet, as training always prohibited removing your helmet during a training operation. But this wasn't training she didn't think, and there was no one else on the planet so far that she could see. Maybe it was because of the poisonous gas that took up presence here on this world, maybe it was the enemy she couldn't see but felt. Or maybe she was just being paranoid; she had to stop doing that.

She put a hand to her helmet, clicking into the radio to the voices of humanity, but only got static in return.

It had only been a week after the two month mark and she knew that she was already losing it. She had been in one place for too long, even though she hadn't. Yes, she had wandered; never being in the same exact spot, but it was all the same wherever she went. Either poisonous empty lands or small towns left in ruins. From what she could see was that whoever had been left behind were either piles of ash or burnt jerky rolled in dirt and sand.

Her mind had started wandering around in the past as her feet took her to the bland future. She knew that supplies were low, and getting motivation to go looking for more was starting to become a bigger chore. It took hours of scavenging just to find a decent amount.

That night she stayed in what was left of a small town that couldn't have had more than ten thousand people once. It reminded her of movie night, of the apocalypse (that never had happened until colonies started disappearing and the planets were destroyed much like this one) and how everyone turned into zombies. Normally there was a small group of people who managed to somehow to survive and go looking for others, but wander into a town such as this and get ambushed. Normally there is a pretty girl, and then a less than pretty girl; you can guess which one gets eaten first.

The town made her on edge, even when she had checked most of the housing district out while scavenging for supplies. She managed to find two water bottles, three cans of corned beef, and a can of cat food. Now she wasn't that picky, but even cat food didn't sound good to her. Her supplies now consisted of four and a half bottles of water, two cans of corned beef, a can of bread (she was actually a bit excited with this one), the cat food, and a bag of freeze dried fruit. She hadn't eaten nor drank for eighteen hours, the air too poisonous to take off her helmet and replenish her energy. The last time she ate she had eaten the corned beef just outside the town she had stayed at and drank half a bottle of water. Now she was feeling lightheaded and her stomach cramped.

Since leaving the research center she had to drastically cut back on her supplies, but only after ignorantly wasting her water and food. She had gorged herself for the first few nights after her scavenging, but now that it was getting harder to find edible things, she regretted her actions horribly. She had contemplated turning back and going another way when the air seemed to be getting more and more poisonous in areas, but she worked through her mind that other parts

of this region were probably the same and that once she got through it she'd hit clean air soon. If she hadn't been so straightforward, she would have realized that no clean air meant no food or water.

She was so stupid! She should have prepared- she should have known thatâ€¦ thatâ€¦ cripes if only her team was here with her. A pang made the Spartan pause in her walk, a wince taking up the shielded face. If she had listenedâ€¦ paid attentionâ€¦ her teammates would have known, would have prepared. Biting her lip, she narrowed her eyes. She wouldn't cry. It had been years since she had seen either of them. But even still, the pain was as fresh as the day when she had heard the news.

It had been the same thing every day, gasps of pain, grunting, and even crying. She knew by now that she was in a place where everyone was in pain, but she couldn't figure out why. She had rememberedâ€¦ a training mission, one that involved rescuing a group of civilians from a group of terrorists. It was in the last stages of the first step of training, so no one really knew what it would be, but there was a rumor that it was something big.

The mission had been a complete failure. The civilians had been bait for an ambush, and she had rushed into the situation, ignoring her teammate's warnings. Another had run after her, trying to stop the Spartan from reaching the civilians. It was her fault he died- Raaja had stepped on one of the many landmines surrounding the terrified tied-up civilians. She had barely pulled through, Mannie dragging her sorry hide back to the shuttle with the help of the marines they had for backup. If it wasn't for her and her stupid mistakes, Raaja would've been alive. If she had died that dayâ€¦

But he could have taken her place at the facility, just like another Spartan was unfortunate enough to share her fate. She didn't know if there really was another Spartan there with her, she couldn't look, but the scientists had repeated threats of harming him if she didn't cooperate. She hadn't looked for him when she escaped, and now she feared that another of her brothers had died because of her mistakes.

During the months of solitude and prolonging the plans of countermeasures, she had a lot to think about. Her existence, like many humans had thought about, the fate of the world, what if this happened differently or what if that happened instead of this; even the whole Spartan program. She wondered if she was supposed to turn out the way she had. Not any trauma she might have endured, the experiments, but the physical aspect of the Spartan body she has been made into.

Of course, the muscles had shrunk over the time in the facility, but were still there, and her ribs were showing beneath the suit, and she could feel her cheeks rub against her jaw a bit too tightly, but overall was she supposed to learn how to beâ€¦ be a hero? Had she really failed as she thought, or was she the misfit amongst perfections?

She remembered how they were like when they were kids, when the family was still all together. How they had dreamed of their future selves and what they thought they would end up like. Now it seemed silly, but back then it was all they had to keep smiling.

When it was bedtime they whispered their fantasies. Some thought that they'd be upgraded somehow, get inhumane powers like heat-vision or something. Others believed that they would finally be able to go on missions with real soldiers and show them how it's done.

A few even thought that they were the next generation of civilians, and were going to be released back into civilization, one believed that their families would be in the same room when they were released, and welcome them back with open arms. Wishful thinking, but considering how cruel some of the trainers have been, it wasn't impossible.

They normally had whispered conversations when the trainers were changing shifts, the precious minutes twice a night were treasured, for it was the only true times they had to themselves. All other times were either monitored or they weren't all together, always on small side jobs or training missions, they loved the time when the whole family was together.

The thoughts of the more recent past- two decades before the freezing- pushed its way into her head. Her guarded knees hit the ground without her noticing, the pain in her chest growing with each second in the unforgiving world.

As she stared up at the same ceiling tiles as she had when she'd woken up yesterday, she heard a few people walk around. Within the time of disorientation, she had still managed to memorize the patterns of the popcorn textured rectangles. An ache in her chest spread throughout her immobilized body, distracting her immensely. It wasâ€¦ painful, more painful than she had ever felt.

The people who were free of their physical restraintsâ€¦ they couldn't have been her roommates. Their strides were too easy, too loose to have been in pain recently. It had to be the nurses making their rounds. She heard a rustle of cloth, a hand grabbing an arm. The gasp of surprise indicated that a patient â€œprisonerâ€ had gathered enough strength to get a nurse's attention, the rasp in their breathing- it had to be a guy, the tone was too deep- was concerning as it was.

"_Iâ€¦" Deep breaths, a rattle in his chest. "Where areâ€¦.?" The last word was pitched high, pain rippling through his being. The sentence couldn't be finished, but it was spoken for him. Fhajad? The sound distorted his voice- but it was definitely Fhajad. A burst of warmth spread through her tired body, the sound of her brother giving her strength in the time of pain and confusion._

"_You're in the infirmary." She didn't get it, but most civvies wouldn't, even if they had watched us grow they wouldn't know what it's like to be part of the family. The ache in her chest was missing something, it felt... empty._

"_Noâ€¦ Whereâ€¦" He coughed, a grimace on his face. "Whereâ€¦ others." There was a pause, the nurse finding the words to say._

"_They're in another recovering room, some are even getting back to training." Her voice was too girly, too perky. Fhajad's breathing was raspy, shallow and quick. The strength in him was dying, but a

Spartan's determination was never to be underestimated._

"_Noâ€| others." What she couldn't see was that his eyes were open, watery and pained but so full of life and dead at the same time, something that was torn from those she couldn't feel. "Theyâ€|" He groaned, cringing. "Who died?" This shocked her. Someone had died? Who? What happened beforeâ€| beforeâ€| what happened? The silence was heavy, a burden. She didn't like it, she wanted it gone. Somebody say something! Please, anything! The ominous feeling had her wanting the silence to return, just anything but this!_

"_I'm sorryâ€| some didn't survive the operation."_

"_Who?" The boy soon to become a man, her brother, asked._

"_Wellâ€| there's no easy way to say their names." She felt a pair of eyes on her, a brief feeling, but it made her skin crawl nonetheless. What were they keeping from her? Her eyes strained, trying to move but unable. The breathing machine continued its steady pace, but the perspiration on her brow made her feel sticky._

A sigh cut through the growing panic, but only managed to slow it down for a mere second. Suddenly she started running through the list of the dead, her tone dropping dramatically, not knowing that in the room only three Spartans were awake to listen to what she had to say. She spoke in codes- or what seemed to be codes at first. But immediately she had worked out that they were their codes, their military names. Burt, Naomi, Jake- wait, noâ€| thatâ€|

Something rocked the bed she laid on, shaking it violently once; then twice. Panic overwhelmed the disabled Spartan as her body shook uncontrollably, the muscles in spasm as her mind overloaded. It couldn't be- she lies! The bitch lies! Mannie can't beâ€|

He can't be dead!

2. Chapter 2

A/N: Hey, sorry for the wait everybody. Credete's computer crapped out on him :(Let's all hope that it fixes itself (its on a loop and he can't access anything) and that no data has been erased. His college life has been hectic and hard on him, so hopefully it'll get better after finals!

I'm to blame for the lateness too of course. Well first of all I haven't really been writing a lot, but I still have about 15k saved up and ready to be edited. Thankfully I've started editing the third and fourth, but I still have to make it... crazier. You'll understand later. Another thing is that I've been grounded. Mostly for bad grades, but going over to a friend's house was icing on the cake. Oh well, it was fun and worth it. Hmm... which reminds me to make hot cross buns and lemon poppy seed muffins for next Tuesday when we get back to school... oh yeah, grounded on Spring Break? Good job self. So proud of you. I think this happened before somewhere. Anyways, been dealing with that crush deal, getting a lot of advice and anti-support from my friend and my sister (you know, advice on just letting him go. Trying!) and homework (which I still have to do... hehe). Anyways, my life has been hectic, but not as mad as Credete's, so don't hate on him. He's awesome.

****So anyways, hopefully this chapter doesn't suck. This was the bad chapter towards the end because I needed a transition into the... newer mood styled writing. Wish me luck on editing the insane parts! :D Love you guys, thank you to those who haven't forgotten about me and this story.****

****PS: Chapter is unedited. I say screw it... and instantly regret it. Ugh. :)****

Gray eyes flickered open, the ground running vertical. Confused at this, she slowly moved, wincing at the ache in her muscles. She must've passed out again, realizing with a sigh. Clenching her eyes shut tight, the dull pain looming in the back of her mind came back. The symptoms of the aftereffects of the augmentations were still there, even after all the years of _'recovery.'_

The aches and pains were normal to her, barely becoming a problem, but no matter how many she had got she could not get used to the headaches. Her emotional pains felt physical, the headaches varied on the pain scale, and she experienced the occasional attack on her nervous system.

She picked herself up from the ground, windblown dust falling away from the green armor. Wiping the helmet's shielding, she looked around, finding an image of what looked like a city on the horizon. She couldn't have been out for more than a few hours. Elbows tucked in, digging into the dirt, she looked behind her over the green shoulder. The highway was a little ways away, the cars looking like dried out ladybugs.

The buzzing in summer air, crawling all over fingers, being passed from one to another. Smiling faces.

She blinked before the Spartan began to pick herself up. Must've been one of her infamous attacks. They had started when she had began her rehabilitation, and took a break when she started some soft training, such as walking and even light jogging on days when she felt special. They had started up again a year ago, and had been growing worse ever since.

At times when she was stressed she would find that a feeling in a body part would be lost, only to come back a few minutes later like nothing happened. It was equivalent to an arm or a leg falling asleep and then having it be painful to move it- what was it called again- a charley horse? But completely blacking out was uncommon, and that was the first one she had within two weeks. Maybe it had built up; maybe she had been out here for too long.

Once her boots leveled with the ground, the world spun shortly after standing. A glove to her helmet, the motion did not help without the physical contact. When the dizziness lazily passed, she opened the air readings, and was glad when she got the results.

The air decompressing within the confinements of the helmet, she pulled the piece of armor off. Hot and humid air immediately attacked her senses, but it was a small relief from the stuffiness the helmet brought to her. Her nose wrinkled, she had forgotten to check the wind patterns before she unmasked herself. The wind was blowing from the city, and even after the time passed from whatever attack had

been made here, the smell of burning flesh still clung. A lot of people had to have died on this planet for the smell to still be here, or the poisonous gases left were just preserving the scent.

She opened a pack on her utility belt held by magnetic force to her thigh, and dug out the first thing her gloved hand got its grip around. She grimaced when she saw the cheesy "Meow-licious!" label. During the first week of desperate scavenging, she had made a little pact to eat the first can she had pulled out. She had always wished it would be the canned bread, which always seemed to evade the groping hand. Handling the cat food, she grimaced. It had to be sometime. Out of curiosity, she grabbed what would've been her second choice and cursed. Damn you canned bread. It mocks.

Grabbing a combat knife with a twisted face, she popped open her lunch with a gag. Did this stuff ever go bad?

A hand went to the abdomen armor, but it was more out of habit than a helpful movement. Behind the golden mask was a green face with gray eyes staring out of its shell dully. Damn you Meow-licious.

To tell the truth the taste wasn't that bad, reminded her of chunky mashed potatoes that was three months expired and had strange blue fuzz growing on it. Surprisingly she had eaten that once on a dare, and even more surprisingly it didn't taste that bad compared to the hairy lunch lady's casseroles. One thing about being 'retrieved' was that she didn't have to put up with watching her wipe her nose with her hand and then wondering if that was only to scare the kids or not. Of course, that was a couple of decades ago, but it still manages to bother her.

But now the cat food felt like spoiled tuna (what did the label on the can say? She couldn't remember if it was chicken or liver or chicken liver), and now it was trying to swim back up stream (she admits that was lame). The gurgling of her stomach was audible to her even without her sensitive hearing (guess we did get some superpowers after all, didn't we Jimmy?).

A half hour after eating and finishing off a water bottle; Meow-licious. That stuff worked fast. Now she knew what not to feed a cat, if she ever got one. Didn't she have a cat when she was little? Mr. Fluffykins or something. Mean little bastard. Never mind about the cat idea, they can eat the trash.

Meanwhile, as her stomach speaks to her, she had been walking towards the shape of the city. So far it had only grown a bit, but with her pace and long strides she managed to cut about a mile off from the distance. Now she could make out the shapes of the skyscrapers, and even caught sight of one that looked like a monster had grabbed it and torn it in half. Well weirder things had happened.

The dust coiled up from the ground, wrapping around her covered calves. A particular cloud of dust made her eyes narrow, things slowly ticking in her mind. Of all the time she had been here, not once had she seen a cloud of dust that high, nonetheless feel the wind blow. The smell of decay had reached her a half hour before, even though she was at least ten miles away from the city. The dust is windblown, but She stopped, head snapping up.

Of all the time she had been here, not once did the wind blow. Something else had to be creating the airflow.

As if on cue, a soft whirl reached the external audio receptors. She spun on her heel, looking up towards the clouds. Of all the time she had been here, the sun had not shown for very long, the overhanging clouds promised nothing but acid rain that never showed. Now that it had brought something new, the bad feeling in her gut said that it was nothing to look forward to. Did the bug-eyed man get hold of a ship?

A shadow appeared in the clouds, growing in size and shade. In a silent explosion the nose of a purple giant burst through the clouds, the floating acid water whispering on the metal hulls in their passing. Black dots in pools of gray expanded, the being detached from the brain that screamed run. Her feet moved on their ownâ€”entranced with the picture being painted before her, walking towards her future destruction. Then the neurons in her brain started connecting, and she snapped out of the stupor. Her mind started accessing the situation in the matter of seconds, enough for half of the ship to appear. It reminded her of some form of alien cobra hood.

She was out in the open without a weapon, she had no cover, and it was miles away from a city. Can she do it?

Immediately she turned tail and ran.

That something she was trying to figure out earlier? Yeah, she found it. But now the question was what did she find? Or rather, what found her?

It wasn't long before she was given the answer of if it was a good something or a bad one. Two minutes after she started sprinting the strange airy whirl sound had changed, sped up somehow, and the ground behind her was pelted with alien bullets. A stray few hit the ground around her, and she caught the sight of globs of light, leaving glowing grains of sand in its wake from the holes they melted in. Whatever found her was pissed. And she didn't even know what she had done! Maybe it was those pesky scientistsâ€¦. Oh bug-man, how she hated thee.

The dust from the alien engines had rose up, swirling faster and faster around the area as the ship neared the ground, the bullets and 'pops' came faster and faster, the distance between them closing in. But with her enhanced agility, running at 45 km/h, the city was coming up quick. Just not quick enough.

Almost immediately the muscles in her legs were straining to keep up, her breath coming in ragged gasps. Even with keeping in some form of shape, the sudden jump of being years of mildly crippled to full on sprinting had exhausted her muscles faster than they should have. It was not for the first time that she had cursed her body.

Up ahead about a half mile a dropship had touched down onto the dusty floor, making a cloak of it to cake onto her HUD. The firing had stopped, but she couldn't look around to see where it was. She was forced to slow down, last thing she'd want was to run into the enemy's ship and be caught off guard. The humming noise grew louder, sounding as if on top of her. Stopping, adrenaline pumping throughout

her system, she hastily rubbed at her HUD.

The dust around her cleared, and when she managed to smear the dust away, she was granted with the sight of monsters in front of her. Of course, the dust film disoriented some of the shapes, but she could see that their ship had left and they were now standing around, the little ones as disoriented as her, while one of the larger ones' head turned, its black eyes staring straight at her. In one moment, all hell broke loose.

The large one roared, the bird ones squawked, and the little ones screamed. She ran, a scream meeting her ears before she bolted. Could this day get any worse?

Her head screamed at her to turn around, to fight back. Instead she was running away like a new recruit on his first day of action. But she didn't have a gun, and she didn't know her enemies. Both were a disadvantage, she knew, and yet her instincts persisted. They told her to grab a rock, a stick, her arm- something and neutralize the threat.

The day had started out normal, waking up in the last place she had scavenged in and continued on; a random muscle attack here and a blackout there. But mid-day was when a strange noise met her audio sensors, her empty gut knew that the barren planet would once be full of life again. The feeling was not joyful, but ominous.

When the sounds of jet engines filled the air, too airy to be of human kind, she had immediately started looking for shelter. But somehow they knew where she was, they knew where she was going. They had tracked her down and opened fire, intent on killing the lone Spartan. She had screamed into the radio, asking politely what the hell was going on and if this was all a bloody trick after all. When a bolt of energy streaked passed her head, the little hairs on her neck rising, she knew that this wasn't a trick. It was not a bloody simulation.

She sprinted across the dry earth, dust picking up after each footfall. The thunder made by alien guns and feet of all sizes boomed, bright flaming balls of greens and blues streaking past the soldier. The city grew in its size as she neared it, passing the boundaries of the outskirts. Screams of alien engines flew overhead, big and little purple ships flying high in the sky. Just when she thought she'd be safe in the confinements of the tall buildings acting as her safe house, a shriek pricked at her ears, the sensitive drums trembling as eyes flicked up to what looked to be an alien fighter jet. Her stomach lurched as a green fiery ball of plasma shot out of the cannon and aimed straight at her.

Lunging forward, the earth behind her exploded, the asphalt smoldering and glowing green. Metal groaned as it scraped against dirtied pavement, the soles of her boots meeting the ground again as they supported her weight. Bewildered, she almost didn't catch that it was coming around for another attack.

She dodged to the side, plasma bullets heating the ground of where she once was, only for her to look up in the face of a beast.

Two halves of a jaw lined on either side of its face, piercing black eyes staring down at her with untold hate. Fangs were attached to the

meaty sausages, teeth as sharp as knives on the underside where lighter flesh was. Its skin was brown and of leather, seeing many suns and withstanding immense amounts of heat. Its alien armor was gold, shining with pride in the cloudy light. It had no ears nor no nose, and when it snarled at her she saw that the sausages would spread apart, revealing that it had no bottom to its mouth. It growled low in its chest, gray eyes in the Spartan's head stretched wide.

Not fast enough, the beast's claws raked against her shoulder, the metal squealing, and she wasn't curious as to how much it would hurt if it had been bare flesh instead of raw metal. She rolled away, her shoulder sparking. Even in the time of calm panic, she could still have the sense of irritation about the greater damage to her family symbol. She sprang to her feet, sparks flicking in the corner of her eye as she took off down the street. She ducked in and out of buildings and alleyways, trying to evade her pursuers. She could hear their ragged pants, the squeaks from the little ones, and the crashes made from debris underfoot.

Eventually the noise started to be put behind her, the whirl of the searching aircraft whistling farther away, and she couldn't hold up the armor's weight anymore. It sunk and clanged against a stone wall, debris falling away and brushing across the scuffed green paint.

She wheezed, the breath coming in with shaky movements before being forced out with grunts and whistles. Her glove went to her chassis, gripping fruitlessly at her chest. Before the augmentations she believed that she'd be alright, that small sense of denial in the back of her mind giving her false confidence. She believed that the operation would go smoothly, be a success, and she'd go on with the rest of her life with her family. Upon waking up on the operation table, she could never had been so wrong.

Ribs broken and chest cavity showing, the images swam in front of her eyes as doctors and scientists worked, determined in their task of making the perfect soldiers. She had looked down, groggily and in pain, but the sight of her own organs and the beating of the muscle in her chest could not register. It wouldn't until the end of the week, were the initial shock of the operation finally took its toll.

Their results had been kept away from them, they who were in a smaller room than the rest. She couldn't move her head, all the power in her athletic body had been sapped by what she claimed to be strong antibiotics and painkillers. After looking at her clipboard she knew that it wasn't the case; that she had been partially, if not permanently, paralyzed and her muscles wouldn't be able to function properly for months to come if at all.

She didn't remember seeing anybody besides the doctors above her, or the scientists checking her vitals and monitoring her progress, most of the time she only saw the too white ceiling of the too strong smelling sterile room. She could hear her brothers and sisters converse quietly, as if pained themselves. She realized that they too had gone through the torture, and wanted desperately to find if they couldn't move as well. The breathing tube shoved down her throat prevented any noise from being omitted, and she could only wait in the familiar sounds of her family.

Their voices, though raw and pained, brought her comfort. They were alive and well, they would survive. But when the ones in lab coats came in and started wheeling her away, drugging her further to prevent trouble, she could feel the panic bubbling beneath her paralyzed features.

Where were they taking her?

What will happen to her brothers? Are they alright?

Answer me! What is wrong with me?

She felt herself being put into an elevator, the humming of the machine brought no comfort as the sterile smell lessened, the lights growing dimmer. Slipping into the ecstasy of slumber, the panic hid.

She had woken up of what it felt like a little after, and for months the scientists and physical therapists worked on getting her motor skills working again. Unused, her muscles naturally protested. More pain.

Months after the reaquired ability to move and talk and the beginnings of walking, they had transported the Spartan to another facility on a different planet. She had trained like she had before the augmentation, regaining her athletic structure and strength, all the while monitoring every moment of it. She didn't hate it, but she didn't like it either. She couldn't remember the transport, just hearing a scientist grumble to himself about the conditions of the new facility.

She wanted to see her family, but whenever she asked about them the workers would change the subject or ignore the question altogether. It wasn't until she was injured again that they sent her to be examined in this medical tube and wake up years later.

Her chest felt like the day on the operation table, split open with her ribs all broken, pointed skyward for all to see her guts and glory. The pain was strong enough in the memory to feel real, but she knew it was just that; a memory.

Her helmet tilted back, she was so tired. But here was not the place to rest. She had to find sufficient shelter, perhaps food and water that was nearby in order for her to survive. It was the most basic of training, and it was something she could not ignore. Biting back a wince, she hefted herself up onto her feet. Tramping forward, she peered out the broken window, the glass dull from the constant windblown sand pelting against the shards during the original attack. Looking to the vacant streets, the absence of movement was reassuring and unnerving.

She slinked over to the door, turned the knob, and felt the object slip through her fingers. With a hollow ring, she tensed every muscle in her body, ears straining for the slightest of sounds. The half knob rolled along the dusty floor, she silently counted to thirty. Hearing nothing, she pressed on the door, the hinges squeaking softly. Another ten seconds. Peeling herself from the wall she walked through the door, looking up and down the street as she did so. Nothing. Turning, she walked the streets, and couldn't help but feel the ominous feeling grow.

3. Chapter 3

It felt like she had fallen asleep only to be shaken awake. Her diagram broke out in spasms, her throat raw and dry as it constricted. She gagged on the smoke, rolling her hips and buckling over. Her muscles ached, stiff and sore from sleeping propped up against the wall. A hand went to her face, only to knock against the HUD. Her helmet was on, but smoke was clogging her lungs.

Staggering to her feet, bracing herself up against the wall when her knee failed to support her. The hamstrings were not merciful; the strain from the marathon yesterday was incredibly harsh. Metal scraping against the wall, the panic that was suppressed in a box within her mind and wrapped up tight burst out of its confinements the second time in the past day. There was no light in the room, distress sounding like a bell in her mind as she staggered about blind.

She couldn't pick up her feet, boots dragging along the burned away carpet flooring. Patches of the shag bunched up under the boot toe, struggling to move. Her arms threatened to collapse on the brick wall she supported herself up on. Her lungs struggled to move, the air she breathed held no oxygen. Where did the door go? She couldn't see the exit, mind foggy. Eyes narrowed, screwed up behind the face shield.

A large piece of shag bunched up in front of her boot, and she was sent to the floor. It might have been fate, or pure coincidence. Because the moment her helmet slammed against her arm plates, feverishly going up to protect her head, the ceiling disappeared. Light poured in the destroyed office, exposing the dazed Spartan to the orange midday sun hidden behind thin wisps of cloud. The smoke escaped, running gleefully away as it flew from its confinements.

Jet engines shrieked overhead, making her wonder how bees got inside her helmet. Out of it, she swatted at the speakers near her ears, the elastic material of her gloves covered in grime and dirt rubbed against the hidden technology. The sound confused her when it overrode the buzzing sounds, and she rolled over onto her back to investigate. The wall disappeared behind her, having crumbled down from the blast. As she rolled onto her back, the floor disappeared out from beneath her as well, fleeing with the wall, and she fell the two flights she had traveled up the other day. She didn't even scream, it took the split second before impact to figure out what was going on.

Her back slammed into the ground, a shoulder twisting as it hit and crushed the only remaining desk still standing. Air rushed from her lungs, pain lacing through her spine and bouncing within the marrow of her bones. The papers left behind in the drawers flew out beneath the Spartan, the molded wood splintering dryly. Dust and papers settled, half covering the wounded soldier. Dazed, her head rolled, helmet settling in a pile of sawdust. She heard nothing as black spots disappeared from her vision one by one. Slowly, the sounds of warfare came back, like the volume dial on a radio slowly turned right.

She blinked, drunk in pain, it was moments before she could clearly see what was going on. Sounds of gunfire and aerial attacks had met her ears before meeting her eyes, and soon she saw that the city was up in flames for the second time in years. Shadows flickered back and forth from the flames, but she could see the slumped shapes in the streets beside her.

The wood cracked as her weight shifted, an elbow supporting her weight as her head hung. She tried lifting it up, a small pile of panic setting in as it reminded her of the days after augmentation, but succeeded and the panic was stored for another time. Suddenly the surface beneath her collapsed, and the desk soon joined the ashy remains of its coworkers on the main floor. Groaning, she felt her arms buckle from beneath her weight, and rolled over onto her shoulder. Behind the HUD, gray eyes squinted, her vision coming back into focus. Soon they landed on the lumps in the streets.

Bodies of all shapes and sizes littered the asphalt, a massacre taking place here. Marines and aliens of all species were tossed like from a little girl's tantrum, and were ragdolls instead of galactic soldiers. It was hard to tell if one side won or not, but the amount of bodies varied from each species. Dozens of the little ones, cannonfodder in the war of the species, were clumped together in packs. The birds had been behind rubble from the first attack on the world, having been struck down by those who had spotted them cower behind their sniping points. The large ones were intimidating, that was no doubt. Even in death their large frames made her eyes widen, never before having seen creatures such as these. But what made her stomach churn were the scattered bodies of humans, the ones she was trained to protect since a young age.

Uniforms tattered and bloodied, guns clenched tight in death's grip, they looked ready to face off on the front of war even when their physical bodies were unable to. Faces, covered in filth and blood, cringed in pain and everlasting patriotism and fear. She looked away when she saw the gaping holes, the seared remains of some. Bloodied piles of mush and jerky, the soldiers were unidentifiable from the alien side's wrath.

Swallowing bitterness, her mind struggled to grasp what was going on. First the planet had been quiet- at least, that's what she thought- and then chaos ensued and she wasn't deathly alone anymore. Suddenly the world felt too crowded, she wished for peace. Not silence, even now when new fires crackled anew, she still saw the ominous being lurk.

Struggling, muscles straining, she got up from the rubble of her landing pad, and rolled onto her knees. Her leg was working now, the clutches of paralysis had left and let go. Her head still felt foggy, her body temperature a few notches higher. She hadn't thought of doing a diagnostic check; couldn't. Screwing up her eyes she breathed in through her nose and out her mouth. Nausea crept from her stomach, away from the sleeping rat, and took hold of her throat. It felt like she was going to hurl. The smoke being lesser now, her lungs stills struggled to function. Her body was a step behind, her mind three. Black circled her vision, making her head spin.

Whatever ruckus had literally dragged her from her sleep was gone, but not too far behind. Focusing, she realized that the airy whirls were now accompanied by the sound of human engines. Somewhere in that

heated mind of hers, she knew that she should rush to the nearest UNSC base and request orders, to fight off the threat as soon as possible, but recent events made her mouth twist into a snarl. If her instincts said to be cautious in war, she'd be cautious on her own terms.

The nearing of jets forced her to stop and dodge under an overhanging. She would have guessed that it had used to be an old autoshop garage, but didn't really have the time to debate on it. Her shoulder slammed into a half wall, her head spinning as her stomach snarled at her. She hadn't eaten for hours, and now she was sure to be running a temp. Snot had begun to dribble from her nose and dried not too long ago, her eyes still burning. When her rations were lost in the homemade elevator in the smoky building this morning, but she had come to terms that if she was going to die- or go crazy, whatever came last- she'd at least get her damned answers. Crap her nose itched.

She needed the truth. The truth instead of more lies, whether they were saved or kidnapped, if their parents were alive, if they had really been orphans or if they were made them. She needed to know just what their entire existence was about, if they were really soldiers or just ONI's playthings. She also needed to figure out just what the hell they were thinking sending her to the damned research facility and not just fixing her with more surgery. Oh no of course she knew that that wasn't how it worked, but they could at least take another shot at it.

A groan slurred out between her lips, a steady pounding started up in her head. Since the fall, a headache had started up and wasn't letting up anytime soon. Another heat flash shuddered through her form, and she found that she had been under the remains of the garage for almost ten minutes. Giving her head a rough shake, she staggered back onto her feet, breathing haggardly. She hadn't much time to dwindle, even if it was to catch up on her rest, she knew very well that a war could turn in an instant. And if that was the case here, she had to move fast.

Whatever sun was behind the clouds had long since had been in the middle of the sky, and now was probably close to setting. It wasn't until the bottom of it had touched the horizon when she heard the ongoing sounds of battle, and neither side were close to winning. Scrambling up the side of a fallen building wall, she was met with a warzone.

Bullets, metal and plasma, flew as their owners ducked in and out from cover. One of the short stouty aliens with the gas masks held a glowing circular pistol of sorts, and fired at a small batch of marines huddled behind an overturned car. They covered their heads, before something happened that made her whole mind get chucked out of the window.

One of the larger aliens, this one dressed in a dark blue armor, roared and ran towards the marines. It was met with another large alien of the same kind, this time he was donned in brown armor with symbols on the shoulders and the back of the armor. Two sides, one species. Whatâ€¦ what was going on here? Was a group of the enemy really on humanities side? She watched as the one with the symbols overpowered the other, knocking the enemy down to the ground. Power radiated off the being as she watched, fascinated.

Gold eyes turned, standing in the middle of the warzone, locking onto hers that were so far away. Behind the golden mask the look of surprise felt foreign as she watched the alien face change from satisfactory of the victory to instant rage. She couldn't tell from the actual expression of what it was feeling, but the look in the eyesâ€ the tension in the face. All at once it grabbed something from its belt and charged in her direction, the roar reaching her ears a second later.

She was frozen to the spot. Surely she wasn't that visible. Of course she didn't know that these creatures were trained to especially look for beings donned in armor such as hers, the old habit imprinted even when they had changed sides. Still, there were some who defied the Sangheili defiance to the Covenant, and stayed with them as stragglers. Who would have known that stragglers such as these would have turned up at the planet of Arcadia?

Grav D'vash was a decorated soldier in both the Covenant and the UNSC, and had been one of the first of Sangheili to switch sides. What made his face contort in such rage was to be a mystery when he became coherent again, but for now his mind was blank. He was not aware of anything, old habits coming into play. Maybe it was the blow dealt by his traitorous brother, or maybe it was the stress of the whole situation, but he was taken back to his Covenant days. And he just spotted a Demon.

The Spartan only watched as the elite ran at her, his alien friends on the UNSC side soon trying to catch up to their commander and find the cause of his blood filled craze. One of them caught up to the large being, halting his advance with a grab of both arms, craning them behind his back. They looked around, trying to figure out why their commander was going haywire. Then they saw her. Shock appeared on their faces, their black eyes locked and shining. They were just surprised to see the objective of their mission standing a mere twenty yards away.

Then something made her heart drop.

A few human marines, dressed in the undeniable UNSC battle armor, running towards the aliens. Guns down. Sweat dripped from their brow, eyes clearing as their faceshields depolarized. A shout of curiosity sprang from one's mouth, clapping one of the goliath of a being on the shoulder plating, asking what was wrong as the alien garbled a mumbled reply.

No hate. No hostility.

Something wasn't right.

The Spartan spun on her heel and skidded back down the hill. Heart hammering, the rubble gave way beneath her, sending her sprawled out on her ass. She feverishly clambered to her feet, finding that she stumbled up against a wall. Breathing haggardly, her eyes found the ground, unable to process any of the thoughts screaming at her silently in her mind. The small hope she had about being rescued, that had been bouncing around her head for the past two months, fell upon deaf ears.

End
file.